

POTOMAC AND RAPPAHANNOCK
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION (PRTC)

OFFICIAL COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

DATE: October 1, 2009

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
14700 Potomac Mills Road, 2nd Floor
Woodbridge, VA 22192-6811

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman May called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Maureen Caddigan	Prince William County
Corey Hill	Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT)
John Jenkins	Prince William County
Michael May, Chairman	Prince William County
George Schwartz	Stafford County
Jonathan Way, Vice Chairman	City of Manassas

ALTERNATES PRESENT

Jean Benson	City of Fredericksburg
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STAFF AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Gina Altis	PRTC Executive Assistant
Monica Backmon	PWC Department of Transportation
Laura Bateman	Patten, Wornom, Hatten & Diamonstein, L.C.
Alyssa Brown	Assistant, Supervisor Michael May
Art Clark	FIRST TRANSIT Safety & Training Supervisor
Bob Corbin	FIRST TRANSIT Bus Operator
Tom Cain	FIRST TRANSIT East Region Vice President
Rick Canizales	PWC Department of Transportation
Doris Chism	PRTC Dir., Customer Service & Dispatch

Joyce Embrey
Aroni S. El
Althea Evans
Sandy Ferris
Anthony Foster
Holly Frisch
Shanta Garth
Gayle Gray
Alfred Harf
Angela Horan
Robb Howell
Ryan Jones
Pam Marble
Mary Marshall
Eric Marx
Betsy Massie
Bernadette Peele
Paul Pitchke
Pat Pitt
Willem Polak
Mark Ross
Cody Smith
Gayle Smith
Charles Steigerwald
Michelle Way
Dale Zehner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wally Covington
Frank Jones
Matthew Kelly
Scott Lingamfelter
Paul Milde
Jackson Miller
Martin Nohe
Frank Principi
Toddy Puller

ALTERNATES ABSENT

David Awbrey
Charles Badger
Harry Crisp
Brad Ellis
Peter LaMarca
Lorraine Lasch
Suhas Naddoni

PRTC Dir., Finance & Administration
Citizen
PRTC Dir., Marketing & Communications
Citizen
PRTC Transportation Project Manager
Citizen
FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Accounting & Admin.
FIRST TRANSIT VP Human Resources
PRTC Executive Director
PRTC Legal Counsel
FIRST TRANSIT General Manager
PRTC Transportation Apprentice
FIRST TRANSIT Legal Counsel
PRTC Accounting & Budget Manager
PRTC Dir., Planning & Operations
PRTC Dir., Grants & Project Management
PRTC Legal Counsel
FIRST TRANSIT AGM-Operations
FIRST TRANSIT Dir., North American Security Ops
Potomac Riverboat Company
Citizen
Greenhome & O'Mara
FIRST TRANSIT
PRTC Senior Transit Planner
Citizen
VRE Chief Executive Officer

Prince William County
City of Manassas Park
City of Fredericksburg
Virginia House of Delegates
Stafford County
Virginia House of Delegates
Prince William County
Prince William County
Virginia Senate

Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT)
Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT)
Stafford County
City of Fredericksburg
City of Fredericksburg
Prince William County
City of Manassas Park

Hal Parrish
Brian Potvin
Sorine Preli
Corey Stewart
John Stirrup
William Wren

City of Manassas
Prince William County
Prince William County
Prince William County
Prince William County
City of Manassas Park

Chairman May announced as a result of a “quorum” not being present, the following “action” items will be acted on by the PRTC Board at the November 5, 2009, Board meeting:

- Approval of Minutes – September 3, 2009
- Treasurer’s Report for Period Ending July 31, 2009
- Advertise for Procurement of PRTC Facility Cleaning Services
- 2010 Census – Partnering Agreement
- Procurement of Line Inspection Services for MCI Overhauls

3. INVOCATION Led by Commissioner Jenkins.
4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Led by Commissioner Schwartz.
5. CITIZENS’ TIME No citizens came forward.
6. PRESENTATIONS

[FT\Info] A. First Transit (FT) General Manager Robb Howell –
Employee Recognition and Operations Report.

Mr. Howell noted for the past several months the bus operators chosen as the “Operator-of-the-Month” have been unable to attend the Board meetings because there was too little time for adequate notice. To facilitate attendance, Mr. Howell noted that beginning with the November Board meeting, the Operator-of-the-Month from two months prior will be in attendance and recognized.

Mr. Howell reported seven commendations (directed to seven different bus operators) were received during the month of September. He went on to report the accident frequency rate during the month of September is 2.42 per 100,000 miles. He also reported the complaint rate on the OmniRide service for September is 4.9 per 10,000 passengers and the year-to-date is 6.88 compared to 7.7 for the same period last year. The complaint rate on the OmniLink service for September is 4.34 and the year-to-date is 4.7 compared to 5.09 for the same period last year.

Continuing, Mr. Howell reported First Transit is experiencing a shortage of bus operators. Training efforts continue with a new class commencing next week and full staffing is expected to return in about a month. Commissioner Caddigan asked how the bus operator shortage has impacted performance. Mr. Howell explained that it has necessitated the use of

“strategic” buses and supervisors to cover scheduled service. Two missed trips did occur during the month of August. The bus service is sustainable at present.

With increased attention being given to the impending flu season, particularly the potential spread of the H1N1 (swine flu) virus, Mr. Howell reported First Transit and PRTC staffs have implemented a multi-faceted “continuity of operations” plan. “Hand sanitizer gel” and “disinfectant deodorizing wipes” have been issued to office staff and bus operators. Swine flu virus masks will be distributed if a major outbreak occurs.

Mr. Howell reported the bus operator “run picks” will occur on Thursday, October 15th in preparation for the November service change. The run picks will be reviewed by the Planning Department staff to ensure that they are well-conceived before they are posted for picks.

Mr. Howell announced the 5th Annual PRTC/First Transit Local Bus Roadeo is scheduled to occur on Saturday, October 31, 2009, at Gar-Field High School. First Transit bus operators from BWI Airport will also participate.

[PRTC\Info] B. Action Plan in Wake of June 15, 2009 Shooting Incident.

Mr. Harf introduced First Transit Vice President of Human Resources Gayle Gray; Director of North American Security Operations Pat Pitt; Legal Counsel Pamela Marble; and East Region Vice President Tom Cain, observing that they are attending the meeting to present the results of First Transit’s additional fact-finding regarding background checking practices. At this time, Ms. Gray provided an update briefing about “background checking practices and enhancements.” A question and answer session followed:

Commissioner Jenkins: Why can’t PRTC\First Transit access the FBI fingerprint database and can this issue be pursued through Congressman Connolly’s office? PRTC Legal Counsel Angela Horan explained the FBI does not allow any employer access into its fingerprint database unless Federal and state law allow it. Currently, Virginia law does not allow this for transit agencies which are not integral parts of individual jurisdictions. She went on to say a Virginia code amendment could be sought to authorize this for PRTC.

Commissioner Jenkins: Expressed support for seeking this change. Mr. Harf replied that if this is the Board’s pleasure, it would be incorporated in PRTC’s state legislative agenda. The general sentiment expressed by the Board was that this would be desirable.

VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS (VRE)

[VRE\Info] A. Operations Board Meeting Agenda and Minutes of September 18, 2009. There were no comments.

[VRE\Info] B. Chief Executive Officer’s Report (9-09).

Mr. Zehner reported VRE experienced a milestone of 95% on-time performance during the month of September on the Fredericksburg line. He attributed the improved on-time performance to both CSXT and Norfolk Southern. With regard to train delays, he explained 25% of train movements were Amtrak delays departing from Washington, D.C. resulting in VRE train delays. Staff is working with Amtrak to improve the situation.

Mr. Zehner went on to report ridership increased about 2% compared to the same period last year. In contrast, he observed that major commuter rail lines located in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York are experiencing about a 4-6% decrease in ridership. Also, the last of the ten new railcars will be delivered in January 2010 and placed into service soon thereafter.

Mr. Zehner announced VRE will operate excursion trains to and from the Clifton Day Antique, Arts & Crafts Festival on Sunday, October 11, 2009. Trains will stop at Manassas, Manassas Park, Burke Centre, and Rolling Road transporting riders to Clifton Day.

Vice Chairman Way asked if the Amtrak train delays will affect the new state-funded Lynchburg train service and has VRE implemented its new "preventive maintenance" plan to help curtail locomotive failure. Mr. Zehner opined it remains to be seen if the new Lynchburg train service will be affected by the Amtrak train delays since it commenced today. He went on to explain the preventive maintenance plan is in place and mechanical failures have decreased. Each evening the locomotives are put through a series of preventive maintenance checks and no locomotive mechanical failures occurred during the month of July.

Commissioner Jenkins asked when the "first" locomotive of the twelve new locomotives will be delivered. Mr. Zehner answered the first locomotive is scheduled to arrive in July 2010 followed by a delivery of two locomotives per month commencing in November 2010.

11. CHAIRMAN'S TIME

[PRTC\Info] A. Prince William County Potomac River Commuter Ferry
Study and Route Proving Exercise Presentation.

At this time, Mr. Cody Smith, Greenhome & O'Mara, provided an update briefing about a "Prince William County Potomac River Commuter Ferry Study." A hard copy of the presentation was furnished. A question and answer session followed.

Commissioner Caddigan: Clarified the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (PWBOCS) voted to undertake further analysis of prospective ferry service usage and diversions so there is a more informed basis for evaluating the merits.

Commissioner Benson: What is the anticipated wake of the ferry boats if the jet propulsion is changed to a propeller? Mr. Smith explained the wake of the boats tends to be driven mainly by the shape of the hull. The boats would be a catamaran-style boat with a double hull. The hulls are designed by the manufacturer to a certain specification so it can be

specified to the manufacturer that a boat has a wake of “x” inches and no more. Through computer modeling, the manufacturer will design a hull that would meet the specified criteria.

Commissioner Benson: With regard to the “no wake zone” waiver, are jurisdictions willing to do so given the number of contemplated trips (i.e., 23 trips in and 18 trips out of the Anacostia River)? Mr. Smith explained the jurisdictions are fine with the number of trips. Using the City of Alexandria (Old Town) as an example, he explained the City currently has a “no wake zone” waiver in place for specified craft and would need to modify the current waiver to allow for a catamaran-style high speed ferry boat. The City is willing to work with the proper authorities on this issue.

Commissioner Schwartz: Is information available about commuter parking and how people will be transported once they arrive at their destination? Mr. Smith answered “yes” and explained the capital cost includes the cost of parking lots as necessary. For example, the Occoquan Harbor Marina has parking for about 500 vehicles which is not greatly utilized during the week. Also, each individual location was researched to determine what type of physical improvements will be necessary to accommodate ferry passengers. Destination points in Washington, D.C. were specifically researched traveling off the Anacostia River and to the Washington National’s pier. It’s about a four block walk at this point to the Navy Yard Metro Station.

Vice Chairman Way: Observed that even with a boat carrying 149 people and traveling at a speed of 30 knots, only 40 percent of the operating costs are expected to be covered. Stated differently, he said the actual cost of the new ferry system would cover a quarter of the cost, accounting for capital and operating costs combined. Mr. Smith explained the capital and operating costs are differentiated because capital costs are eligible for Federal funding that is expressly for ferries.

Vice Chairman Way: What type of reliability would be realized in the ferry service schedule based on unforeseen circumstances? Mr. Willem Polak of the Potomac Riverboat Company (Alexandria-National Harbor Water Taxi) operates service between George Town and Alexandria, Alexandria and Mount Vernon, and Alexandria and National Harbor from the first of March through the end of December and explained the taxi service operates 10-12 knots and is no more than a minute or two late on average. The biggest problem the taxi service faces is the river tides and traveling under the 14th Street Bridge (river debris is an occasional factor).

Chairman May: Commented the PWBOCS asked that an additional market research analysis be conducted to ascertain what populations will likely utilize a ferry service. He went on to say it’s important to establish whether the ferry service attracts new transit riders rather than diverting riders off of PRTC buses and VRE trains. Bus transportation is the most efficient form of mass transit in terms of operating subsidies and should not be jeopardized. Mr. Smith explained “modal shift” will be studied as part of the anticipated next study.

Chairman May: Does Maryland have jurisdictions who are interested in commuter ferry service and have discussions taken place? Mr. Smith replied “yes” and noted both Charles County and Prince Georges County has expressed interest. Greenhorne & O’Mara is scheduled to meet with the Charles County Commission on November 17th.

Mr. Harf: Explained there are multiple markets identified in the previous study that would be examined more carefully in the next phase of work. Some are markets that are well-served by existing bus and rail service while others are not (e.g., the Maryland/Ft. Belvoir market). He went on to explain the next crucial phase of work will include research about how many of the 280,000 estimated annual trips subdivided among the markets come from bus, rail, and driving. He went on to highlight the Navy Yard as a market that is well served by bus and rail, noting that farebox recovery for the Navy Yard bus route is quite high (over 70%) and observing that this is due in part to the fact that the express Navy Yard bus route makes an intermediate stop at the Pentagon. The Pentagon stop is important because it’s a confluence point for bus routes that are coming from various places in Prince William County with an easy transfer to the Navy Yard route, taking less than one hour of travel time.

Commissioner Hill: Commented it is important going forward with the next phase of work that preliminary financial planning be conducted. He suggested a Federal contribution be sought and recommended the region’s “travel demand forecasting” model not be the only tool used.

[PRTC\Info] B. Announcements:

1. Chairman May announced the PRTC Operations Committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday, November 5, 2009, 5:30 p.m., to discuss the “effects of traffic congestion on running times for OmniLink and call volumes.”
2. Chairman May announced the PRTC Executive Committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday, November 5, 2009, 6:15 p.m. regarding the PRTC FY 2009 Audit.
3. Executive Director’s Self-Evaluation Mail Out in Mid-October. Chairman May noted the Commissioners will receive the Executive Director’s self-evaluation in mid-October and asked the Executive Committee to serve as the Evaluation Committee, readying a recommendation for the full PRTC Board’s consideration.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S TIME

[PRTC\Info] A. Executive Director’s Report.

Mr. Harf reported Congress passed a one-month “Continuing Resolution” (CR) to extend SAFETEA-LU and appropriations, noting that this is just a prelude to another short-term extension of perhaps 18 months. Grant awards will not happen until an extension of longer duration occurs.

Mr. Harf reported Secretary Homer discussed the deteriorating state revenue situation with the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) on September 17th. CTB members were informed of impending cuts in FY 2010 grants already pledged to transit systems, meaning PRTC will realize a \$300,000 cut on the operating side and about \$40,000 on the capital side.

Mr. Harf went on to report that preparations for the anticipated recurrence of the H1N1 (swine flu) virus are complete including enhanced cleaning of buses and the Transit Center lobby area. Hand sanitizer and anti-bacterial wipes have been distributed to staff. Bus operators have been directed to wipe down the most commonly touched surfaces (e.g. handrails, fareboxes, etc.). Hand soap has been upgraded to an antimicrobial product and sanitizing dispensers have been placed in strategic locations throughout the Transit Center.

Moving to another subject, Mr. Harf reported that at the request of the "New Directions School" administration, discussions have occurred about the possibility of creating a year-long student pass for PRTC bus riding privileges. Staff is in the process of preparing a proposal for the school administration's consideration.

Continuing, Mr. Harf noted PRTC is in the process of installing surveillance cameras on the OmniLink bus fleet and anticipates completion of the effort by the end of calendar year 2009.

In conjunction with the fall schedule change on November 9th, Mr. Harf noted the inauguration of an express bus route to Tyson's Corner with Prince William stops at the Woodbridge VRE Station and Rt. 123 commuter lot (four morning trips and four afternoon trips). As an introduction to the new express bus service, a fare discount will be offered and Wi-Fi capability will be available. The new bus service is a state-sponsored service as a coping strategy to ease traffic congestion on the beltway while the I-495 HOT Lanes are under construction. Both the state and PRTC are interested in ensuring the success of the service and a major state-funded marketing campaign is planned.

Commissioner Jenkins asked if PRTC and First Transit will immunize bus operators and essential personnel against the flu. Mr. Harf explained PRTC has arranged for each employee to receive a free seasonal flu shot. Since the seasonal vaccination does not cover H1N1, arrangements will be made for employees to receive these shots when they are available. First Transit is currently in the process of exploring cost options to immunize its employees.

Commissioner Jenkins recommended an express bus route also be considered with regard to people who reside on the western side of Prince William County and commute to Tyson's Corner via I-66. Mr. Harf explained those riders are already served by existing bus services to the Vienna and West Falls Church Metrorail Orange Line Stations from which bus service to Tyson's Corner is available. He went on to explain the state's interest in funding an express bus route to Tyson's Corner via the eastern side of the County is to help ease traffic on the beltway during the construction of the I-495 HOT Lanes. Commissioner Hill added that the soon to-be-completed I-66 BRT/TDM Study will call for still-better bus

service to/from Tyson's Corner via I-66, and went on to say that the Board will receive a presentation on this at the November meeting.

[PRTC\Info] C. Information Items:

1. PRTC Service Performance Reports. There no comments.
2. PRTC Budget-to-Actual Comparison. There were no comments.
3. H1N1 Virus Preparations. There were no comments.
4. Communications:
 - a. Related to Funding. There were no comments.
 - b. Related to Jurisdiction. There were no comments.
 - c. General Interest. There were no comments.

OTHER BUSINESS/COMMISSIONERS' TIME

Congratulations to Jonathan and Michelle Way on their 43rd wedding anniversary.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman May adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, November 5, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: PRTC Transit Center
 14700 Potomac Mills Road, 2nd Floor
 Woodbridge, VA 22192-6811
 Main # (703) 583-7782
 Fax #: (703) 583-1377

